

NUER MARRIAGE CEREMONIES

593 from the first millet of the year—a pretty custom known as *juthem kwo*, honouring
591 with porridge.

842 All are equally anxious for a child to be born, the husband and wife because they
want a son and the wife's parents and kin because they cannot, without risking
complications, dispose of the cattle of the marriage till a first-born completes the union.
Those whose daughters they might wish to marry would not be happy about accept-
ing such cattle as bridewealth in case they had suddenly to be returned to the husband.

591 When a child is born the mother remains with her parents till she has weaned it.
This is a suitable regulation, because after the bridewealth has been paid the husband's
father is likely to be short of lactating cows, while the wife's parents will have plenty
of milk from their herd. If, for some reason, the wife goes to live with her husband

862 before the child is weaned, it may not be weaned without the consent of her parents,
and I have seen a husband pay several cattle to atone for contravention of this rule.

602 A *kwo*, first child, belongs to the home of his maternal grandparents and if he is
weaned in his father's home he returns to live with them, a boy till he is initiated and

603 a girl till she is betrothed. This is the rule, though there is variation in practice,
858 depending on the ability of the maternal grandparents to support the child and on the
relations between them and their son-in-law.

852 Shortly after the birth of her first-born the wife, now called *pai dap*, a nursing
mother, brings the baby to her husband's home and lays him in the ashes of the hearth
in the centre of his grandfather's byre, a rite known as *nong puka*, the bringing to the
ashes. Beer has been prepared and is drunk by a few senior kinsmen of the husband

591 who live in his hamlet. It is a domestic, and not a public, ceremony. The wife
• [273] spends a few days in her husband's home and returns with the child to the village of
her parents. She has as yet no hut of her own in her husband's homestead.

591 When his first-born has been weaned the husband builds his wife a hut in his father's
homestead facing the family kraal. He then goes to ask his parents-in-law for his
585 wife. They do not deny him, even if, as is likely, some of the bridewealth cattle are
still owing. They give her a horn spoon and a gourd and she takes these with her
to her husband's home. The gift of a spoon is emphasized by the Nuer in speaking of
marriage, because it is a recognition that the woman is now, in the full sense, a wife,
who will eat of the porridge of her own gardens with the milk of her own herd.
She now milks her husband's cows instead of her father's and hoes the gardens of
his home and not those of her childhood. Before she is given a spoon, even if she
hoes a garden at her husband's home she takes the harvest back to her father, or she
may live at her husband's home and cultivate in her father's village, if it is not far.
It is only when a man's bride has borne him a child and tends his hearth that she
becomes, in the Nuer sense, his wife. She then makes a *buor*, a mud fire-screen, and
the spirit of his lineage comes to dwell there. Later his father tells him to build a
byre and gives him a few cows to start a herd.

The marriage has thus reached completion through many stages: betrothal
ceremony, wedding ceremony, consummation ceremony, the birth of a child, the
[606] bringing of the first-born to his father's byre, and the presentation to the wife of a
spoon as a sign of her domestic separation from her family. She comes to her
husband's home not as a wife but as a mother whose breasts have suckled a child
of their lineage.

RESOURCES OF THE NUER

262 to part with some of his dura. So want is never far from
437 the door of the Nuer home.

273 A drink—more or less intoxicating, according to the
amount one drinks of it—is made from dura. Nuer are
very fond of it. They frequently get intoxicated enough
to fight when they have had their fill of it.

THE NUER IN BUSINESS

241 Few Nuer men engage in any business that helps others.
Practically every Nuer man has a plot of ground where he
may raise the family's supply of dura, but he seldom
thinks of raising any to sell.

The Government has tried to interest the Nuer in
raising cotton, but with no marked success so far.

326 A few men are blacksmiths and make the spears, fishing
spears, and ornaments out of iron, brass, or wire.
They sharpen old hoes, spears and such like, and make
good money in this line. The equipment a blacksmith
requires is decidedly meagre. A piece of iron to hammer
on, a piece of iron to hammer with, and a fire, constitute
the usual equipment, although one occasionally sees a
chisel.

342 Some men make a reputation for themselves by their
skill as roofers. The roof of a Nuer house when new is a
very pretty piece of work, being quite smooth and even.
It takes a good roofer to fix a roof so that the heavy
tropical rains do not go through it. Men roof the houses,
but the making of the long grass eaves to protect the wall
from rain is considered as women's work and is left for
them to do.

323 - Women sometimes make earthen pots and sell or
438 trade them to others who are not so well versed in this
art, but practically all women are more or less proficient
in pottery.